MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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No. 6.

MARION MARLOWE'S PERIL

OR

A MYSTERY UNVEILED

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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MARION MARLOWE'S NARROW ESCAPE;

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By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

MARION GETS WORK AS A REPORTER.

It was Monday morning and Sylvester Horton, city editor of the New York *Star,* was seated at his desk with a terrible frown upon his handsome features.

Reporters were coming and going, and there were a score of people scribbling at long tables and desks, while a dozen typewriters and two telegraph instruments kept up a continual clicking that added materially to the business-like hum of the department.

Suddenly Mr. Horton touched a bell on his desk with unusual viciousness.

"Tell Villard I want him!" he said, to the boy who answered.

Mr. Villard, an assistant, left his desk and went at once to his superior. He was a pale, slight, young man, with a nervous, excitable manner.

"Mr. Villard!"

"Yes, Mr. Horton!"

"Is Miss Spencer specially busy this week?"

"She has the Dobbs affair and the women's clubs; yes, she'll be rushed all the week, or at least until Friday."

"How about Miss Dent and Miss Allyn?"

"Miss Dent is at home, sick—Miss Allyn is here. She can speak for herself, but I guess she's got her hands full, all right."

"Well, I need one of them badly! There's a big Sunday story in sight! Tell Miss Allyn to come here; I wish to see her!"

Mr. Villard bowed and crossed the room to where Miss Alma Allyn, one of the *Star's* most experienced reporters, was sitting at a desk writing.

In a minute Miss Allyn was at Mr. Horton's side. She was a fine-looking, stylishly-dressed woman, about twenty-five years of age, with an alertness of manner that always made her noticeable.

"Miss Allyn, do you remember that story

we published six months ago about the disappearance of beautiful Leonie St. Clair, wife of St. Clair, the artist?" began Mr. Horton. "Well, there's a rumor that she has returned. I don't know how true it is. Of course, if it's straight, we want the story before the other papers. Can you look it up and see what there is in it?"

"Why I thought she was considered dead!" said Miss Allyn, in surprise. "Her parents gave her up, I'm sure, and so did her husband."

"I know, we all decided that she must be dead, but I have a tip that she is still living," said the editor; "that she is hiding from her family, in fact, in the home of her husband, and, of course, as she was a prominent society belle before her marriage, a story on this suspicion will make salable reading."

"I understand," said Miss Allyn, smiling. "You think we can hint at the rumor and then work it up; interview the artist and the parents and that young man who figured so conspicuously in the case, and altogether make a very acceptable rehash of the matter. Well, I like the idea and I'm sorry I can't take hold of it, but, really, Mr. Horton, I'm up to my ears this week! What with the woman's convention, and the Seventh Ward murder mystery, and the International delegates to be interviewed, and that article on 'How to Furnish a Flat with Soap Boxes and Blue Denim,' I am neither eating nor sleeping just at present."

"That seems to be the general cry," said the editor, gloomily, "and I'm determined not to put a man on that story. It will take a woman and a clever one to get around St. Clair, for they say he refuses himself to all reporters."

"I've heard he was a crank; however, that's nothing against him," laughed Miss Allyn, "but, by the way, Mr. Horton, I know a girl who will work up that story for you! She never did a day's reporting in her life; still I'm not a bit afraid to recommend her."

Miss Allyn's eyes were shining with a sudden idea, and the eagerness in her voice did not escape the editor.

"Who is she?" he asked, with an interested glance.

"She's the girl that the papers were full of last week," was the prompt reply. "She was lured into an opium den by that singer, Carlotta, and was rescued by Howard Everett, dramatic critic of the *Daily*. She is a dear friend of mine, and lives with me in my flat. I'll guarantee that, with a little coaching, she'll get that story up beautifully."

"I wouldn't dream of trusting a thing like that to a green hand," was the rather crusty answer.

"Oh, but I'll promise to help her all I can!" said Miss Allyn, quickly; "I'll look after the 'scare heads' and all that sort of thing. Once she gets the news, I'll find time to write it up for her."

"Well, that's different," said Mr. Horton, with a sigh of relief. "I respect your opinion, Miss Allyn, and furthermore she'll have a week to do it in, as I'm determined to have the thing for a leader next Sunday."

"Then you'll try her? Thanks! And I'm sure you'll not regret it! Shall I wire right away?" she asked, impulsively.

"Let's see, what's her name?"

The editor had turned back to his desk as he asked the question.

"Marion Marlowe," said Miss Allyn, promptly. "She is a country girl. She's only been in New York a short time, but she has already played the rôle of heroine in a dozen different tragedies, and you heard her sing, yourself, on the stage of the Broadway last week. She was billed as 'Ila de Parloa' in the Temple Opera Co."

"What, that magnificent creature!" cried Mr. Horton, wheeling around. "That beautiful, queenly girl, with a voice like a nightingale! Is it possible she is willing to be a newspaper reporter?"

"Marion is willing to do anything that is honorable to earn her living," said Miss Allyn, soberly. "She has several offers to sing again, but the shock of her first week's experience has made her a bit morbid. She dreads to go back to the life behind the scenes. She is just the soul of goodness and purity and honor!"

"Wire her at once!" said Mr. Horton, with decision; then as Miss Allyn turned away a smile crossed his features.

"Here's luck," he thought, with a little chuckle. "That girl impressed me in a wonderful manner the other night. She's the most handsome creature that I ever saw—and then I hear that Howard Everett is half in love with her and—well—I'll not be sorry to make a little trouble for Everett."

The smile had deepened considerably now. It was plain to be seen that he bore no love for the critic.

Meanwhile Miss Allyn had sent her message to her friend and was back at her desk, writing as busily as ever.

An hour later Mr. Villard stopped at her desk to hand her some copy.

"Oh, Mr. Villard," said the young lady, quickly, "what do you know of the artist, Vincent St. Clair?"

There was no reply for the space of a second. When Miss Allyn looked up in some surprise she found Villard's face a study.

"Oh, you don't like him," she began, but he interrupted her.

"I hate him!" cried the young man, fiercely, then he calmed himself somewhat. "Excuse me, Miss Allyn, I will try to answer your question," he said, politely. "I know St. Clair to be fairly clever; I know furthermore that he is an unscrupulous man—he'd sacrifice his soul any day for his art. He is one of those people who are too ambitious to be honorable."

Miss Allyn frowned, and her eyes grew thoughtful.

"Poor fellow! Perhaps the loss of that beautiful wife has affected him! Well, I do certainly hope that she will come back some day," she said, slowly; "I'd almost rather a person whom I loved would be dead than 'missing;' there's something about that word that gives me the shivers."

"It suggests dark plots and uncanny deeds, doesn't it?" said Villard, with a shudder.

"It does, indeed!" was Miss Allyn's answer, and at that instant she turned and saw Marion Marlowe just entering the department.

CHAPTER II.

A WARNING.

As the beautiful young girl came suddenly before them, every person in the department stopped work and stared at her.

Such a vision of loveliness was seldom seen in this sordid atmosphere of business life, and her coming seemed like a breath of spring—there was a freshness and fairness about her that was almost bewildering.

A small boy was escorting her carefully toward Mr. Horton's desk, which was at one end of the room behind a high iron grating.

Marion Marlowe was a little over seventeen, but tall for her age, and her lithe, willowy form was beautifully molded.

Her skin was perfect and her lips like cherries, while the wealth of chestnut hair that adorned her queenly head was as soft and rippled as daintily as an infant's.

She walked with the free, springy step of

a healthy country girl, and the beauty of both face and figure was exquisitely set off by a simple gown and dainty bonnet.

"By Jove! She is a beauty!" whispered Mr. Villard to Miss Allyn, as he watched her disappear behind the iron grating. "If that magnificent girl was a sister of mine I'd build a barbed wire fence around her instanter!"

"Miss Marlowe can take care of herself," said Miss Allyn, proudly.

"I'm not so sure," was Villard's low reply. "She may be brave enough, but she's not proof against treachery."

"None of us are," said Miss Allyn, calmly, "but what do you mean, Mr. Villard? You surely don't think that Mr. Horton would harm her."

Mr. Villard shrugged his shoulders and the frown on his face deepened.

"I don't trust any man very far," he said, sourly; "especially when he is dealing with a deucedly pretty woman."

There was evidently something behind the careless words, but he walked away without further explanations.

Alma Allyn's brow puckered into a little frown, and she turned uneasily and stared at the iron grating.

"Had she done right in bringing Marion into such an atmosphere as this?" She asked herself the question but could not answer it.

For Marion Marlowe was indeed her dear friend, tried and tested by experiences which could not have been more exacting; furthermore, Marion's soul was as pure as the driven snow—she was the emblem of all that was best and noblest in women. Both she and her twin sister Dollie had lived with Miss Allyn for a little while prior to Dollie's marriage, and although there was no tie of blood to unite them, they loved each other dearly.

The clever reporter went on with her work but her mind was ill at ease, and it was a relief when the boy came and told her that Mr. Horton wanted her.

Marion was glancing over some old files of the paper as she entered, but she rose at once to greet Miss Allyn.

"Oh, Alma, do you really think I can do it?" she asked, softly. "It was so kind of you to think of me, but somehow I doubt my own ability as a newspaper reporter."

"Nonsense! You'll do it all right," said Miss Allyn, decidedly.

"If you need any assistance in working up the story," said the editor, "you can call on Miss Allyn, as I shall be busy. She will be able to give you what help you require and for that reason," he continued, turning to Miss Allyn, "I wanted you to hear the outline of the story as I give it to her."

Miss Allyn bowed, and the editor went on:

"The case is this, Miss Marlowe: Vincent St. Clair was married two years ago to Leonie Townsend, the daughter of the millionaire, Geoffrey Townsend. St. Clair at that time was an artist of no particular reputation. He had just come over from the other side, and the match astounded society, as it was supposed that the daughter and heiress of so wealthy a man would wed some one in the fashionable set if not a nobleman. However, everything seemed all right—the old man gave his daughter a house completely furnished and a dowry of fifty thousand dollars for her wedding present, and the young couple started off in life with a clear path before them.

"Six months ago Leonie St. Clair suddenly disappeared. Her husband declared that she left her home one afternoon to call upon her mother, and as she did not return that evening, he supposed that she had remained all night at her parents' home. He

went for her the following day, only to learn that she had not been there. The police were put on the case at once, but up to the present time they have found no trace of her. Meanwhile, somebody—the police presumably—has started the theory of suicide, and even the newspapers have been obliged to accept it. Now, I have been informed through a source which I can not yet mention, that the artists' wife did not commit suicide; in fact, that she is not dead, but is at present hiding in her husband's home. There is the outline of your story, Miss Marlowe."

"And what am I to do?" asked Marion.

"You are to find out first if her parents have an inkling of any such state of affairs. You are to find out if the woman is alive, and in hiding, and where—why she is in hiding, why it has been concealed so long—if her husband or any one had any motive for letting her be supposed to be dead—in fact, you are to sift the whole matter to the bottom, and get the facts without letting any one know what you are after. I would see the parents first if I were you. Then St. Clair has one intimate friend, Oliver Dayton; here's his picture, published last week in connection with a society function. Make his acquaintance and see what he knows of the matter. I believe he was reported to be mixed up in it. Don't fail to have the whole story in here by nine o'clock Saturday morning."

"She'll do it all right!" said Miss Allyn, who saw nothing specially difficult in the assignment.

"I'll do my best," said Marion, somewhat nervously. "If I fail it shall not be because I have not tried, but I can hardly imagine myself interviewing anybody."

"That part of it is 'dead easy!'" said Miss Allyn, with a glance at Mr. Horton. "Both men and women like to talk; all you need do is set them going!"

Mr. Horton was standing with his glance upon Marion, and an expression of admiration in his eyes that even his business anxiety could not quite obscure.

He felt very little doubt about her ability to get the story, but it seemed almost a sin to ask her to do it.

"A woman to be loved and protected," he thought, as he watched her; then he almost blushed at such unaccustomed sentiments. Marion put into her pocket several newspaper portraits and clippings that the editor had given her, and then, with a charming smile, she bade him good-morning.

"I will do exactly as you have told me, sir," she said, sweetly. "I will interview the others first, and then I will find some reasonable excuse for calling at the studio."

"You can arrange for a picture of yourself," said Mr. Horton, quickly. "That will be the most reasonable, and, of course, I will pay for it."

"That is all right, dear," spoke up Miss Allyn, as she saw the look of surprise on Marion's face. "He means, of course, that the paper will pay for it, so here's your chance to get a fine oil painting."

Marion smiled and blushed, but she saw that they were serious and was quite clever enough to see the business side of the suggestion.

A few moments later she was on her way, a full-fledged reporter, armed with her first "assignment."

"It seems like a dream," she whispered to herself as she tripped down the stairs. "I wonder what I will do next to earn my living!"

Little did she realize what her present duties would bring forth or what she must undergo before this week's experiment was ended.

It seemed perfectly right to her—this interviewing and cross-questioning, for was it

not an attempt to unveil a mystery—to solve a problem which interested all humanity?

She had undertaken it fearlessly and with a perfectly light heart; there was not a suspicion in her mind that any danger to her might accompany it.

As she reached the sidewalk and hesitated a moment before venturing on the crossing, some one tapped her on the shoulder in a decided manner.

"Beg pardon, miss, but you dropped this," said a curiously strained voice.

Marion felt a letter being thrust into her hand; then as she glanced back she saw a slight young man running up the steps of the building, which she had just left.

There was a crush on the crossing as her car came along, and forgetting all else, the young girl hastily boarded it.

As soon as she was seated she looked at the letter. It was addressed to her and had not been opened. Marion discovered in an instant that it had never before been in her possession.

"That is very strange," she thought, as she broke the seal. "Some one has written me a letter, and taken pains to have it delivered in a most extraordinary manner!"

As she glanced at the contents she could not repress a start. Her face turned pale in spite of her courage.

It was very brief, but the words alarmed her exceedingly. Their import was unmistakable—there was no room for misunderstanding.

"Dear Miss Marlowe," it began, "be warned in time! This assignment is dangerous and will bring you trouble! Avoid Vincent St. Clair as you would the evil one! No woman is safe who enters his studio!"

The note was unsigned and was written on a typewriter.

In an instant Marion looked down into her lap for the envelope but she was doomed to disappointment, for it had disappeared—a gust of wind from the open car door had apparently blown it into oblivion.

She folded the letter and placed it in her pocket, while a look of defiance caused her beautiful eyes to flash like diamonds.

"Pooh! I'll not be scared by an anonymous letter!" she whispered to herself; "but, oh, it does seem as if danger was always about me! I am a victim of fate if ever there was one, but I will not turn back! That would be weak and cowardly!"

CHAPTER III.

MARION HEARS MORE OF THE ARTIST.

The residence of Geoffrey Townsend was uptown in one of the city's handsomest blocks, and as Marion was bound thither to interview Leonie's parents first of all, she settled back in a corner of the car and tried to compose herself a little.

Presently two young women entered the car and made their way directly toward Marion's corner.

They were both handsome and graceful, but neither was expensively dressed; on the contrary, it seemed to Marion as she glanced at them idly, that they were just a little tawdry in appearance.

As the car ambled along they began chatting together, their first remark attracting Marion's attention.

"St. Clair is a crank of the very first water," said one of them, spitefully. "Why, I only posed for him a week, and he nearly killed me! He wouldn't let me wink, and as for breathing, that was out of the question!"

"You are a dandy if you can go a week without breathing," said the other, laughing. "Why, Winterton is bad enough, but he does let me breathe occasionally. By the way, it was funny about St. Clair's wife,

wasn't it? She disappeared like a dream—I should think her folks would be crazy!"

"I guess they were for a while," was the answer; "but, of course, as soon as they really believed she was dead, they felt better about it. Ever see her, Jean?"

"Yes, twice," was the reply, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I saw her once before they were married—she was beautiful then—a perfect picture of happiness; then I saw her the day before she did the vanishing act—she looked like a ghost; I hardly knew her!"

"There was something on her conscience to make her look like that, I can tell you!"

"Well, I should say there was," said the other girl, laughing. "She had Ollie Dayton on her conscience, according to reports; oh, I guess there's no doubt but what he was at the bottom of the trouble."

"Doesn't seem to have made much difference with St. Clair's friendship for him if he was," was the scornful answer; "they are as thick as peas. I always see them together."

"It was a funny deal all around," said the other girl, as she signaled the conductor, "but the suicide theory was all right, I guess. The only mystery is that they never found her body."

As they left the car Marion was staring after them in a wondering manner. It was the same story that she had just heard from Mr. Horton with slight variations.

"They must be models," she thought as the car bounded on. Then it suddenly occurred to her that perhaps this would be a good way to interview the artist—it would certainly bring her closer in touch with him than by merely sitting for a picture.

Marion smiled slightly as she thought of herself posing for the artist and at the same time trying to ferret out the mystery of his wife's disappearance as well as the place of her present whereabouts, but Mr. Horton had told her of the grief of Mr. and Mrs. Townsend and Leonie's friends in general, and she was beginning to feel a little resentment toward the artist.

"If his wife has come back he ought to say so," she whispered. "I can't imagine his going so far as that! I'd say she was alive and well, if I didn't say anything else; but perhaps he's ashamed of having taken her back—some men are such moral cowards!"

She sprang off the car as she came to her street. This brief twinge of resentment had brightened her up wonderfully.

She had just reached Fifth avenue when she saw a familiar figure coming toward her and for a second she stood irresolute and a trifle embarrassed.

"What, you, Miss Marlowe?" said a pleasant voice.

Howard Everett, "musical critic" of the *Star's* most formidable rival, was holding out his hand to her cordially.

"I must not say a word of this to him," was the first thought that flashed through her mind, and then she gave him her hand and smiled bewitchingly.

"I—I am on my way to make a call," she said, a little stupidly; then, as her eyes fell on a big building exactly opposite where she was standing, a little mischievous smile stole over her features.

"My aunt, mother's sister, lives over there," she said, indicating the monstrous brownstone building with a little nod.

"What, at 'The Norwood,' Miss Marlowe? Why, how extremely singular! That is where your humble servant dwells with his one solitary sister!"

"Is it possible?" asked Marion, shyly, as she turned slowly toward "The Norwood."

It began to look as if she must make good her words, for the critic had turned also and was evidently bent on accompanying her.

"Yes, Aunt Susan has lived here some time," she went on, rapidly; "but I have only seen her once since I came to the city. You see it is this way," she added, with a charming blush, "my uncle, Mr. Frederic Stanton, is a very rich man, and when Aunt Susan married him she threw us over completely. We were only poor farm people who vegetated in the country."

"But did not your aunt receive you cordially when you called upon her?" asked Mr. Everett in astonishment. It did not seem possible to him that any one could ever dream of slighting so fair a creature.

Marion threw back her head with a ripple of laughter.

"Oh, you ought to have seen the reception I received," she said, gayly. "Why, the glaciers of Norway could not have been colder, Mr. Everett. They simply froze me out of the building with their ultra-fashionable frigidity!"

"How disgusting!" said Everett, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "Well, I wouldn't go near them again, I can assure you!"

"I wouldn't either, if I could help it," was Marion's quick thought, but there seemed to be no other way to get out of her dilemma. Aloud she simply remarked, "Oh, I must not mind such little things as that, I suppose, but please, Mr. Everett, don't let me detain you."

Howard Everett stopped and held out his hand. They had just reached the vestibule of the handsome entrance.

"It is I who must not intrude," he said, quietly, "but, dear Miss Marlowe, I am in trouble. May I ask you to help me?"

Marion's sympathetic gaze was lifted instantly to his face.

"Oh, what is it, Mr. Everett? I shall be so happy if I can be of any service!"

"Listen," said the gentleman, with a sudden expression of sadness. "My only sister, whom I love dearly, is slowly but surely being lured into sin. She is infatuated with a man whom I believe to be without a vestige of honor, and who will leave no stone unturned to lead her to destruction. I have done my best, but a man has no tangible grounds upon which to throttle such an enemy. If he had wronged her I could kill him; as it is, I am forced to wait. He is subtle, crafty, and as smooth as oil. I see the end clearly, yet I am powerless to prevent it."

"And what can I do?" asked Marion, eagerly.

Her heart was beginning to bleed for this strong man's sorrow.

"I want you to meet her and talk to her, please, Miss Marlowe! Poor, dear Alice is not yet lost to all sense of shame, but my influence will not suffice and as for discipline —that is useless. She needs, poor child, what she has never known—the tender, loving care of a mother or sister."

"Poor, poor girl! It is no wonder that she is weak!" said Marion, softly. "Oh, do take me to her at once and let me plead with her, Mr. Everett! I will beg her on my knees to give up this traitor!"

"If she does not he will wreck her life. It will come to that!" muttered the critic, hoarsely.

"Who is he—the villain! The infamous monster! Do tell me his name at once!" cried Marion, impulsively.

Howard Everett clenched his hands and set his teeth as he answered.

"Don't ask me! I have a horror of speaking his name. He has won her heart but he has not broken it yet. I will be just while I can—but eventually, I shall kill him!"

The thundercloud on his brow almost terrified the young girl, and she raised her little hand and laid it on his arm beseechingly

"Don't! Don't! Mr. Everett!" she cried appealingly. "Bring your sister to my flat to-night, if possible! Both Miss Allyn and myself will be delighted to see her."

"Thank you," said the critic, in a sorrowful tone, "and Heaven grant that you may imbue Alice with some of your bravery, my dear Miss Marlowe!"

He raised his hat and left her abruptly. There were tears in his eyes, and he was striving to hide them.

In less than a moment the beautiful girl, now sad and thoughtful, was hurrying away from the vicinity of "The Norwood."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN IN THE CASE.

As Marion was ushered into the magnificent parlor of the Townsend Mansion, after sending in her card, she could not resist shuddering at the sorrow she felt to be about her.

The blinds were drawn and the windows closely draped, while even the pompous butler who admitted her stepped about on tiptoe and hardly spoke above a whisper.

"Poor parents, they mourn their daughter sincerely," thought Marion, sadly. "The house is as gloomy as a vault, and I do not wonder!"

Then she gave a little start and almost bit her lips to keep from crying out, for the butler had raised a curtain so that a shaft of light entered the room and fell directly upon a full length portrait in one end of the parlor.

"Well, if that doesn't look like me!" whispered Marion, as the servant left the room. "I wonder if it is possible that can be Leonie!"

She was staring, wild-eyed, at the canvas as if fascinated by it, and the picture that she looked upon was well worthy of her attention.

A beautiful young girl, slightly but gracefully molded, seemed almost stepping down out of a bower of rustic boughs and roses.

She had an oval face, with Marion's own wide, gray eyes, and her head was crowned with a wealth of chestnut hair which rippled and waved in the same dainty fashion.

Marion was staring so hard at the canvas that she did not hear a light step until a soft, lady-like voice recalled her to her senses.

"That is our daughter Leonie, our dear child who has left us."

Marion sprang quickly to her feet with a murmured apology.

As she moved she stepped directly into the shaft of light, and with a little scream the lady darted toward her.

"No! No! It is not Leonie after all!" she cried, stopping short. "Oh, my dear, you must pardon me, but I thought you were my child. You are so alike! Oh, Leonie! Leonie!"

In an instant the young girl was at the lady's side.

"It is I who should apologize for startling you," she said, sweetly. "I was staring so hard at that beautiful portrait that I did not hear you enter."

She assisted the elderly lady to a seat on the sofa, where in a very few moments she regained her composure.

"You are from a paper," began Mrs. Townsend, gently; "oh, tell me, have you learned anything new about my missing daughter? Some way I am always hoping that the papers will find her!"

She was looking at Marion so earnestly that the young girl moved uneasily. It was impossible for her to tell this mother the rumor about her daughter.

"I understand! You need not answer," said the lady, sadly. "You have heard nothing—my darling is dead. Oh, will I ever be able to believe it?"

"But was it not proven so?" asked Marion as quickly as she could. "Do not her father, her friends, and her husband believe it?"

"Yes, yes, they do!" cried the poor woman sharply, "but I am her mother—I cannot believe that she would do it!"

Marion knew that she referred to the suicide theory, which had finally been accepted to explain the young wife's disappearance, but for a time she was so distressed that she could hardly speak, for this mother's grief was still poignant and pitiful.

"I have come to ask you about her husband," said Marion, after a moment's pause. "Has he any reason whatever for wishing to deceive you in this matter?"

The sad lines around Mrs. Townsend's lips tightened, and a look crept into her eyes which told Marion volumes.

"When we were asked that question before, we refused to answer it," she said, slowly, "because we feared the ill will of our artist son-in-law, but now I am free to say that neither my husband nor myself approved of the match; we had other hopes and ambitions for our darling daughter."

"And he knew of them?" asked Marion, quickly.

"We made no secret of our feelings before the marriage," was the proud answer, "afterward we accepted him and made the best of it."

Marion had gained the first point for her coming story, for, as Mrs. Townsend said, this information had been withheld at the time of the mysterious disappearance of Leonie St. Clair. The world at large knew nothing of any opposition to the artist

"I thank you for your confidence, and oh, I do pity you so!" said Marion, with a little sob in her voice as she rose to go. "Our editor thought of reviving the story of your poor child's disappearance, but I hope he will not do it now, for I fear that it will pain you."

"No! No!" cried Mrs. Townsend plaintively, "I thank him for his interest, for, do you know"—here her voice sank to a thrilling whisper—"I simply cannot believe that she is dead! I feel that she lives, and it is this publicity that will rescue her! Some one will hear of her fate—every one will hear of it—and, in sympathy for the poor child and her suffering mother, they will be constantly on the watch, as I am, for some tidings of her!"

Marion's eyes filled with tears, as she caught the poor woman's hand and kissed it.

"Oh, that I might be the one to restore her to you! I pity you, madam, from the bottom of my heart! To think of a dear one being lost, and not to know whether she is dead or alive—in comfort or in pain—in safety or in danger!"

"You will help me search for her, will you not?" cried the lady, eagerly.

She reached out impulsively, and took Marion's hands in hers, while she gazed into her eyes with almost feverish intensity.

"I will, indeed—to the extent of my power!" cried Marion, solemnly. "I will stop at nothing that woman can do, but oh, my poor Mrs. Townsend, you must be brave and strong, and above all, be prepared for the worst, for if wealth and skill have been fruitless, what can I expect to accomplish?"

"Too true," murmured the lady, her lips saddening again; "but I am grateful for your sympathy, my dear, brave girl, and you have comforted me because you look like her, my angel!"

"Poor, wretched woman," thought Marion, as she hurried from the house. "I can see that she was as proud as Lucifer once; no doubt she wished her daughter to marry a nobleman and disliked the poor artist so

thoroughly that she did not disguise her feelings. Still, few men would be so vindictive as to seek revenge for that. He must be without a heart if he can so torture this poor mother!"

A stylish team was standing before the entrance of a hotel a few blocks distant, and as the young girl passed a strange coincidence happened.

A tiny poodle had strayed out of the building and close upon its heels came a big, brutal-looking negro.

He had just raised one foot to give the poor creature a kick when Marion sprang forward and snatched it from the pavement.

"Stop! How dare you?" she cried, as she faced the fellow furiously.

The negro stopped short and glared at her savagely.

"You are a brute to kick a little dog," she said, severely. "Quick, tell me who owns it so that I can restore it to them!"

"Yo' better drop dat dog, miss, 'fo' I tak' him away from yo'," said the negro, sullenly. "Yo' doan hab no right to interfere in dis hyar biz, no how!"

"I have a right to interfere whenever I see a helpless creature being abused," said Marion, boldly, "and as for your taking him away from me, you had beter not try it!"

"Quite right, and I thank you for your kindness, miss!" called a pleasant voice as a gentleman came hurriedly from the hotel corridor.

Marion looked up at the speaker with a smile on her red lips, but her eyes were still snapping with indignation.

"Is this your dog, sir?" she asked, handing the little creature over. "If he is, I advise you to give that brute a few instructions in the care of him in future."

"I'd brain him if he was my nigger!" said the gentleman, sternly; "but I am only calling here with my sister, and it seems that her pet has gotten away from her. I beg you will accept our thanks for protecting him so nobly."

He had spoken as naturally as possible, but there was a look on his face that puzzled Marion.

"Thinks he knows me, I guess," was her rapid mental conclusion. "Or my face must remind him of some one else—there can be no other reason for his staring so strangely."

"I love animals," she said simply, in answer to his thanks, "and this little fellow is a beauty! I am glad I was in time to prevent that brute from hurting him!"

She gave the negro a cutting glance of reproof as she spoke and then nodded pleasantly to the gentleman, with a brief "Good-morning."

He raised his hat as if she were a queen, and Marion could feel his eyes upon her long after she had passed him.

The young girl walked on rapidly, the smile still curving her lips. Suddenly she stopped short on the walk and drew her "clippings" from her pocket.

"Oh, how dreadful!" she gasped as she selected a photograph from the bunch. "That was Oliver Dayton, 'the man in the case,' and to think, I thought by his face that he was an honorable gentleman, and yet those two models said he was at the bottom of all the trouble!"

CHAPTER V.

MARION MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Marion was thinking so deeply as she walked along that she hardly noticed which way she was going, but suddenly the sound of a sob attracted her attention and she turned around quickly.

A boy of some ten years was just behind her. He was weeping pitifully, and his eyes were red from the emotion.

In an instant the tender-hearted girl had her hand upon his shoulder.

"My poor boy, do tell me what is the matter," she said, sweetly. "Are you in trouble of any kind? Is there anything I can do for you?"

The boy looked up into her pitying face and burst out crying harder than ever. It was such a paroxysm of grief that Marion almost wept in sympathy.

"My mother is dying," he blurted out between his sobs. "Oh, miss, if you would only come home with me perhaps you might save her!"

"I will go at once," said Marion, quickly. She was always ready and glad to do an errand of mercy.

The boy brightened up wonderfully at her earnest words, then a shadow crossed his honest features.

"Ma won't like it because I told you. She's awful proud," he said slowly, "but she's dyin', I know she is, so I ain't to blame for tryin' to save her."

"Indeed you are not, so hurry, my boy," said Marion, decidedly. "If your mother is ill she must be taken care of—and I can see by your face that you are not deceiving me."

"Oh, no, miss, I wouldn't do that!" said the boy, beginning to sob again. "Ma is all I've got, and I'm all she's got, and—come quick—it's right down here. You don't mind the walk, miss, do you?"

"No, indeed," said Marion, as they both hurried along. She had been walking toward Broadway; now she had turned in the opposite direction, and the boy was leading her toward the East River. About half way between Second and First avenues the boy darted into the hallway of a dingy apartment house and Marion followed him up five flights of stairs with all the speed that she could muster.

At the rear of the top floor the boy paused a moment. He was still a little worried about displeasing his mother.

"Go right in—don't delay," said Marion kindly, and the next instant they had both entered the shabby apartment. Never would Marion forget the sight that met her eyes. She stood for a second almost gasping at the misery of the scene, then darted forward to the ghastly, emaciated woman who was sitting bolstered up on a bed in the corner of the room.

In an instant she had seen that the boy was right. His mother was certainly dying, and from the effects of that dread disease consumption.

"You must pardon my intrusion;" said Marion, quickly, but gently. "I saw your little boy crying on the street, and when I insisted upon knowing his grief he told me that you were ill. So please don't blame me for coming, but just let me do something for you."

As she spoke she took the poor, thin hands of the invalid in her tender grasp and gently smoothed her disordered hair with a soothing motion.

The great, startled eyes of the sick woman wandered to her face and studied it for a moment with searching intentness.

"Thank God!" whispered the white lips, finally. "At last I have found some one I can trust. I have no friends—no faith; but yes—yes—I can trust you."

"You can, indeed," said Marion, warmly; "but, now first of all, I am going to send for a physician—a friend of mine—who will come to you at once, my dear madam; then I shall stay with you a while and make you comfortable. Oh, you need not say no," she added, smilingly, as the woman began shaking her head slowly. "You are ill, and I am a nurse. You see, I must stay and help you."

Marion drew paper and pencil from her pocket and hastily scribbled a note, which she addressed and gave to the boy to deliver.

"Tell Dr. Brookes to hurry," she said as the child snatched his cap and started for the door. Then she went back to the bedside of the haggard woman.

But Marion's very next glance at the pale face clearly told her that the physician would be too late. The poor woman was dying; she could not last many minutes.

As she attempted to lay the wasted frame back upon the pillow the invalid's bird-like fingers closed around her own and her hollow eyes seemed burning with the very intensity of their scrutiny.

"No, no, don't lay me down," she whispered shrilly. "There is something—a secret—which I must tell you, miss. I thought I would die with it locked in my soul, but for the sake of my honor—for the sake of my son—I must—I must tell it!"

Marion supported her gently with her strong young arms.

"If it will make you any happier to tell it I would certainly do so, madam," she said softly; "but if it distresses you——"

"No—no! I must," whispered the woman again, and then a terrible fit of coughing shook the wasted frame like an aspen leaf.

When she recovered her breath she was almost gone. No one knew it better than herself, and with a tremendous effort of the will she attempted to rally.

"You will find them under my pillow when I am gone," she gasped, brokenly, "the story of my birth, my life, my marriage; then there is the other—the certificate that he, the monster, denied. Oh! I pray you to believe me, miss—I was his legal wife—I am Donald's sinless mother!"

The agony of the wasted face cut Marion to the heart.

"Of course I believe it," she asserted, stoutly, "and all the world shall believe it, too; I will see to it that this is done. You have been wronged, but do not let it distress you, dear. In heaven all these terrible things will be righted."

"I believe that," murmured the woman, a faint smile crossing her features. "In heaven my husband will love me again. He will take me to his heart as he used to do when we were both too poor and humble to dream of treachery—before the mocking image of ambition, of fame, came between us."

Her voice was stronger now, and as she talked she sat almost erect in bed, her glazing eyes fixed staringly upon a distant corner.

"Oh, you did love me, darling, and I loved you, too! Some way I have always loved you, in spite of your cruelty and treachery. When you left me years ago with my babe on my knee I could not find it in my heart to say of you what others did. I only loved and waited and then I followed—followed? Oh, God, to what? To find myself spurned! To find that in your hour of triumph you had married another."

She sank back on her pillow with a little gasp, but as Marion bent over her there was one more faint whisper:

"Even then I loved you so, Vincent, that I held my peace. But now that I am dying—dying——"

The waxen lids closed over the staring eyes. With one feeble flutter the breath left the frail body.

Marion Marlowe only waited to cover her face; the next second she was staring eagerly at one of the papers from under the pillow.

"Vincent," she called him. "Vincent," she whispered; then she almost screamed as her eye fell on the paper.

"Great Heaven! this woman was Vincent St. Clair's lawful wife! Here is her marriage certificate!" she exclaimed, in horror. "Well, that will be a startling bit of news for my paper, and who knows but that it may be the clue that will lead to the clearing up of the mystery about Leonie!"

CHAPTER VI.

A KISS OF FRIENDSHIP.

At a late hour that afternoon Marion was riding with her friend, Dr. Brookes, toward the little flat in Harlem which she was occupying with her friend, Miss Allyn. She had found so much to do for the poor, bereaved boy that her assignment for the paper had almost been forgotten. What she had accidentally learned was so opportune and so exceedingly startled that she felt justified in looking into it more closely; and, besides, there was still plenty of time for interviewing the others.

"That is what I call a wonderful coincidence," said Dr. Brookes as she told him the whole story. "It is one of those marvelous things that sometimes happen. A true saying it is that 'one-half of the world knows nothing about the other half.' But you and I, Marion, seem to have a faculty for piecing the two halves together."

"In this case it was a valuable faculty to have," said Marion, smiling. "Oh, how Mr. Morton's eyes will stick out when I tell him what I have discovered."

"Not one of the detectives ever guessed it," said the doctor, thoughtfully, "and they had a dozen or more on the case. I remember it perfectly!"

"Wasn't there a reward offered for any knowledge of the missing woman?" asked Marion suddenly. "There usually is in such cases."

"I am sure that her father, Mr. Townsend, offered one—I don't know the amount," was the doctor's answer; "so it is very evident that Leonie's disappearance was genuine—she went out like a candle, leaving absolutely no trace behind her. But as for this poor woman," he continued sadly, "if we tell the authorities who she is we may be placing obstacles in the way of getting at the bottom of the other matter. We have already proved that St. Clair is a scoundrel; now the thing is to ferret out the disappearance of his wife, and ten to one this marriage certificate is the clue to work on!"

"She may have heard of the first wife," said Marion slowly. "You have arranged matters with the undertaker, haven't you, doctor?"

"Yes, and he's a friend of mine, so he will do as I say. The woman lived there as 'Mrs. Dent,' and no one knows anything about her. The boy is coming to stay with me and be my office boy, and you have given me the papers that the woman intrusted to you."

"Which means that we have it all in our hands so far," broke in Marion, excitedly. "Now the next thing for us to do is to interview the artist."

"And that is the very thing I don't like," said the physician sharply. "I hate to think of your coming in contact with that man, Marion!"

There was no mistaking the warmth of this sentiment, and the young girl looked up shyly to find the doctor gazing at her.

"Oh, Marion! Why is it that you cannot love me?" he blurted out suddenly. "Am I so old or so hideous that I am repulsive—or what is it?"

He drew up his fine athletic figure unconsciously as he asked the question, and his handsome features were flushed with eagerness.

"I don't know why I don't love you," was the girl's honest answer. "No, you are not ugly or repulsive," she added, with a trace of mischief: "it is just natural obstinacy, I guess, that keeps me from loving you."

"Well, won't you try to conquer it some day, dear?" was the next eager question. They were riding slowly now, and the utter solitude was propitious. The doctor leaned toward her in the carriage as he waited for his answer.

Two pearly tears glistened on the long, dark lashes, and her voice trembled slightly as Marion attempted to reply to him.

"I guess I am cold-hearted, or something," she began very weakly, "for someway my brain seems so filled with the sorrows of life that there is no room for the happiness that I see others experiencing."

Dr. Brookes laid his hand gently on hers as it rested on her knee.

"Forgive me for speaking of my love, Marion," he said, humbly. "I never intended to wound you again, but some way when

I see you I seem to lose my head entirely. I must control myself better, for I would rather die than offend you."

A deep glow of appreciation shone in the luminous gray eyes as the young girl raised her eyelids and looked at him for a moment.

"What have I done to deserve such good friends?" she asked, impulsively. "Surely, no girl ever had such brave, loyal friends as I!"

"And no girl ever deserved them more," said the physician, promptly, "for no girl ever bore up under such trials and adversities, and no other girl was half so loyal and true to others. Oh, I haven't forgotten one of your heroic deeds," he went on rapidly, "I remember how you, an innocent country girl, came to this big city to rescue your sister from danger! I know how you saved Miss Allyn that night of the fire, and then just think how you rescued poor Mary Ray from a grave in Potter's Field! Why, Marion, dear, you are a wonderful woman!"

"So hush!" cried Marion, who was blushing furiously. "You are making too much of these things, I assure you!"

But the young physician's eyes were shining with such admiration that her own lids fell and she was obliged to deftly change the subject.

"Mr. Ray and his sister are in Florida," she said quickly. "I had a letter yesterday; his health is much better."

"Marion!"

Dr. Brookes spoke softly, but with an eager intonation.

In an instant a rose flush spread over the young girl's face, for with her extraordinary intuition she knew what was coming.

"Marion, dear Marion, do forgive me, please, but do you love Archie Ray? I know I have no right to ask, but believe me, it will be better for me to know it!"

There was a moment's silence, in which neither seemed to breathe, then the beautiful girl raised her eyes to his honestly.

"Archie Ray asked me that question once, and I told him I did not know—I must answer you the same—I am not sure that I love him."

"But you are not sure that you don't!" said the doctor, quickly. "Ah! Archie Ray is a lucky man! I envy him that doubt in your heart!" he added slowly.

"You are so good—so noble," whispered the young girl, softly.

He raised his head slowly, but with a determined air, and there was a light in his eyes which made them wondrously beautiful.

"Whoever is blessed with your love is blessed, indeed, Marion," he said, gently. "If it cannot be me, I must bear it like a man. At any rate, I am proud to be your friend, and I am that, am I not, little woman?"

They turned toward each other and their hands met involuntarily, but the pledge seemed too trifling for Marion's impulsive nature.

With a quick, graceful movement, she leaned a little nearer, and as he read her glance he kissed her lips—it was the seal of their friendship, pure, loyal and sacred.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING WITH MISS EVERETT.

Alma Allyn was at home when Marion arrived, and as the young girl sprang from the doctor's carriage she came to the door to meet her.

"I was watching for you," she said, as she nodded to Dr. Brookes. "I rather thought you would come down to the office and report to Mr. Horton."

"Couldn't. I didn't get through in time," said Marion, as she too nodded "good-by" to the doctor, as he drove away, "but come upstairs quick, Alma! I have such news to tell you!"

"It doesn't seem possible!" was Miss Allyn's comment, when she heard the tale. "To think that St. Clair had two wives, and neither detectives nor reporters were clever enough to discover it!"

"Oh, there's no detective in the world shrewd enough to catch a loving woman!" said Marion, wisely, "and that Mrs. Dent, as she called herself, did love that rascal, even after he told her that her marriage was a sham. And when she followed him to this country and found him married to another, it was this love alone that kept her silent.

She would not wreck his future by exposing his villainy."

"And you say there is a boy?" asked Miss Allyn, softly.

"Yes, a dear little fellow! Dr. Brookes has taken him! Oh, he'll be nicely cared for, I can assure you!"

"And who knows but what St. Clair can be forced to make him a handsome allowance! I would not give him the custody of the child, though, if I had my way," said Miss Allyn, thoughtfully.

"I heard a couple of 'models' in the car call him a 'crank,'" said Marion.

"'Crank' doesn't express it! He's a loon!" was Miss Allyn's energetic answer. "Why, they say he aspires to outshine the old masters, and that he works day and night on the most hideous pictures!"

"Perhaps his mind is affected," began Marion, charitably; then it suddenly occurred to her that she had something else to tell her.

"Oh, by the way! See here!" she cried, as she pulled a piece of paper from her pocket. "A young man thrust that into my hands just as I was leaving the *Star* office this morning! Do read it, Alma, and tell me what you think of it!"

Miss Allyn took the crumpled letter of warning and read it carefully.

"The plot thickens," she said, frowning, "now, who the mischief is trying to scare you out of being a reporter?"

"It will take more than that to scare me," said Marion, contemptuously, "although I must admit, Alma, it did make me feel uneasy."

"Naturally," said Miss Allyn, deeply. "Anonymous communications usually do. I suppose it is because they are always written by the meanest curs in creation."

"But perhaps it is some one who really knows something about the artist," said Marion, slowly. "Perhaps they mean it all right and are only ignorant."

"I can't excuse such ignorance," said Miss Allyn, who was still savage. "I am going to keep this note, dear, and try to find out the writer."

"As you like," began Marion, and just then the door-bell rang.

"Howard Everett and his sister, I am sure!" she said, quickly. "I forgot to tell you that they are coming this evening."

"What!" cried Miss Allyn, sharply, "Howard Everett's sister coming here! How in the mischief did you ever meet her?"

Marion looked considerably surprised, but she replied very calmly:

"I haven't met her yet. I am just about to meet her. Mr. Everett himself told me that she was in great danger, and I promised him I would talk to her, and perhaps I can help her."

"Oh, that's it!" said Miss Allyn, with a little grimace. "Poor Everett, I'm sorry for him, but I guess his sister's case is hopeless!"

"Oh, don't say that!" cried her companion, earnestly. "No case is hopeless, and oh, Alma, you will try to help her!"

"Of course," said Miss Allyn, with a peculiar smile, "and I can just see how Alice Everett will appreciate my efforts! Oh, I'll get a lot of thanks for my good intentions, I can assure you!"

Their guests were at the door now, so there was nothing further to be said. Mr. Everett shook hands with the ladies, and then introduced his sister.

Alice Everett was a blonde, but there was something unnatural in her coloring—her skin and eyebrows were too dark entirely for such sunny tresses.

Even Marion's inexperienced eyes detected this, and a sigh rose to her lips as she thought of the foolish vanity which had prompted such inartistic bleaching. She was a bright, vivacious girl, whose manner was pleasing, but her love for dress and admiration was so apparent that it really did seem at first as if her case was "hopeless."

"So delighted to see you," she said to Marion. "I heard you sing, you know, and was just charmed with your voice, and then, confidentially, of course, my brother is badly smitten, which caps the climax of my longing to see you. Oh, he doesn't admit it," she rattled on, as she saw Marion blush, "but I am quite clever enough to detect the symptoms."

Marion tried to reply gayly, while Howard Everett looked decidedly uneasy, and it was

Miss Allyn who finally carried him off to a corner.

"Do you know I am just crazy to go on the stage," went on Miss Everett. "If it wasn't for my brother I'd apply for a position tomorrow. Oh, I do so want to be an actress! Why, I have taken part over and over in private theatricals, and every one says I have ability and talent."

"We can't always believe what everybody says, sis," said Mr. Everett, who had overheard her. "Everybody is nobody's friend, and nobody is everybody's. You shall certainly go on the stage some day, if that is your ambition, but you know you are young yet. A girl of seventeen is not safe on the stage, unless she is chaperoned or is very strong in her character."

He glanced at Marion as he spoke, and his sister saw it and began pouting.

"You mean if I was like Miss Marlowe, brother! Well, I'm not a paragon of all the virtues, and I don't care to be, either."

"Oh, I am sure he doesn't mean that," said Marion, quickly, "for no girl was ever any more green than I am. Why, I have a perfect horror of another professional engagement."

"And I would just love it!" cried the girl enthusiastically. "Bright lights! Music! Flowers! Applause and admiration! It is what women are made for—why should not they have it?"

"Dear me!" said Miss Allyn, with a curious shrug of her shoulders. "What pictures you do paint of woman's sphere, Miss Everett! Why, I supposed that women were made to work, work, work! To darn stockings, cook, keep the house and tend the baby!"

Miss Everett tossed her head in disdain as she replied:

"Excuse me from any of that, if you please! I have never worked, and I never intend to! I consider it quite enough to be ornamental in the world—let the scrawny old maids do the useful act if they wish to!"

"Oh, I am sure you must have some worthy motive in life," said Marion, sweetly. "We all have to do something, be it much or little. In this great human hive not one of us can be idle."

"Well, I can and will," said Miss Everett, complacently. "I am not going to so much as soil the tips of my fingers in my life! There will always be some one who will gladly take care of me."

Howard Everett's sigh went straight to Marion's heart. For the first time that evening she felt that Miss Allyn was right. It did, indeed, look as if the case was hopeless.

Without a moment's hesitation she faced the flippant girl squarely and her musical voice, as she spoke, sounded strangely tense and solemn.

"And I will not soil my soul with the stains of an unperformed duty while I live!" she said slowly. "I will not brand it with the stigma of uselessness or selfishness! So long as I am on earth there will be others to care for, and not for the world would I falter in my duty toward them! The man or woman who lives solely for self is lost. There is no happiness on earth like that of doing for others."

As the last syllable fell from her lips, Marion's gaze was riveted upon Miss Everett's face.

There was not a sound for a moment in the little parlor, but she was pleased to see that her guest was blushing furiously.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EARLY MORNING CONFIDENCE.

It was not necessary for Marion to report at the office of the *Star* the next morning; her work was laid out and she had only to finish it.

As soon as Miss Allyn had started downtown she put on her hat and ran over to tell Dollie of her new vocation. Dollie was her twin sister, a beautiful girl, who, since her marriage only a few weeks before, had assumed a matronly air that was wonderfully charming. (If our readers have not read Nos. 1 to 5 of "My Queen," they should do so at once, and learn of all the previous adventures of Marion, Dollie and their friends.)

Marion did not tell her what her assignment was, but left her to be surprised by it when she saw it in the paper.

"I want to astonish you with my cleverness," she said, as she kissed her blue-eyed

sister, "for oh, Dollie! I am sure it is going to be a startling story!"

"You can't surprise me, Marion," was Dollie's proud answer. "I am always expecting great things of you, sister. Why, haven't you proven over and over that you are simply wonderful!"

"I hope I'll have a sweetheart some day who thinks as much of me as you do, Dollie," was Marion's laughing answer.

"Why, what a pig you are! Haven't you three already?" cried Dollie, gayly. "Mr. Ray loves you—Dr. Brookes loves you—and just think of Bert Jackson—he simply adores you!"

Both girls laughed merrily at this mention of Bert. He was a country boy, a Poor Farm waif, who had run away to the city with Marion's help after being cruelly treated by the Poor Farm keeper. (See No. 1 "My Queen.")

The three had been good friends at home in the country, and this friendship had been kept up after they reached the city. Now Bert's wheel of fortune had made a lucky turn. He had been adopted by a rich man and was now traveling in Europe, but every little while a letter came which was full of ardent expressions of love for Marion.

"Poor Bert," sighed Marion, as she ran lightly down the steps. "He is such a boy, and yet I believe his affection is genuine."

She looked at a clock as she hurried along. It was only half-past nine, too early by far to interview the artist.

"I'll just take the elevated and go and see Dr. Brookes," she thought, as she turned in that direction, and just at that instant a gay voice hailed her.

"Good-morning, Miss Marlowe! You are out early, and so am I!"

Marion looked up quickly and saw Alice Everett, dressed in a dashing driving costume and perched on the high seat of a "T" cart.

She was holding the ribbons over her spirited pony's back like a veteran horsewoman, and soon reined up to the curb with a flourish.

"Who says I am not a good sister?" she continued, with a slight blush. "Why, I got up at eight o'clock in order to drive Howard up here to keep an appointment at the Mystic. Get in, do, Miss Marlowe. I'll take you wherever you want to go! I'm out now, so it doesn't make any difference, and then I'm no slave to time, anyway!"

She rattled on as Marion was climbing into the seat by her side, but as they almost flew downtown she became suddenly very serious.

"Do you know," she began slowly, as she pulled the pony up a bit. "I've been thinking about what you said last night. I suppose it is a selfish existence that I am leading."

"But you got up early to drive your brother," said Marion, quickly. "Oh, I guess you are not altogether selfish, Miss Everett!"

"Well, I'm pretty bad," said the young girl, honestly. "You see, mother and father died when I was nothing but a kid and, well, I don't know much of anything, except what Howard has taught me, and brothers are apt to be too easy, I guess; anyway, mine is, and the result is he has come to regret it."

"Oh, but you must not let him regret it! You must turn over a new leaf!" said Marion, sweetly. "Your brother loves you dearly, and he would be so proud of you if you were just a little more ambitious."

The brave girl spoke out candidly, for she was deeply in earnest. She had taken a genuine liking to the frivolous young girl, in spite of the fact that she disapproved of her frivolities.

A look of sadness crept over Alice Everett's face, and she struck her pony sharply with the whip before she answered:

"I am ambitious," she said, with a frown, "but it is to be a rich man's wife—not to be the slave of others."

Marion looked at her earnestly; she did not quite understand.

"See here!" said the girl, suddenly. "I like you, Miss Marlowe! You are not the preachy kind, even if you are so perfect! The fact is, I'm in love and I'm going to be married! Howard shall not stop me—not even if he is my brother!"

There was a shrill ring of defiance in her angry words, and for just a moment Marion was at a loss how to answer.

"But if you tell him you are sincerely in love, and the man is worthy——"

"He will simply laugh at me," broke in Miss Everett.

Then, seeing Marion's look of astonishment, she hurried to explain.

"He will say that I am a child and that I do not know what love is; further, he will say that the man I love is not worthy, and that it is my duty, if I marry any one, to marry the one he chooses for me."

"He does not seem like that," said Marion, thinking only of the last part of her remark.

"Howard is very strict; idiotically so," went on the girl. "Why, he scolds when I am out too late at night—he raves because I drink wine and smoke an occasional cigarette, and he simply goes on like a fiend when I mention my lover's name—and to think that any man living could object to Vincent St. Clair, the artist!"

"What!"

Marion Marlowe almost rose from her seat as she spoke that one word.

"Is it possible, Miss Everett? Is Mr. St. Clair your lover?"

"We have been engaged for a month," said Miss Everett, coolly. "Nobody knows it—not even my brother. For some reason or other Howard hates St. Clair, but I fully intend to marry him without his consent or knowledge."

"Then why have you told me?" gasped Marion, in astonishment.

"I have told you in confidence," said the young girl, smiling, "and I know you well enough to know that you will not betray me."

Marion bit her lips—her brain was in a whirl. It did not seem possible that her companion could be serious.

"But it has not been proven that Leonie St. Clair is dead," she urged, after a minute. "You surely would not marry a man while there is a doubt on that subject."

Miss Everett shrugged her shoulders, but she grew a shade paler.

"She's dead, all right! She committed suicide," she said, slowly. "There is one man in this town who can prove it, and he is Ollie Dayton."

Marion thought a moment before she spoke again.

"Were you acquainted with this artist before his wife disappeared?" she asked, as quietly as possible.

The girl burst out laughing in genuine amusement.

"Not a bit of it! I never saw him until after I read of it in the papers; then I made a point of getting acquainted with him, just to make Tom mad—Tom was the fellow I was engaged to at the time—he hated the artist, and I hated him. My brother picked him out for me; his name is Tom Villard."

The name sounded familiar, but Marion could not place it.

"There he is—there's Villard now!" exclaimed Miss Everett, suddenly.

Marion looked around and smothered an exclamation.

They were just passing the undertaker's shop where "Mrs. Dent's" body lay, and the young man had apparently just come out of the establishment.

For an instant she felt tempted to tell Miss Everett all; then another look at Mr. Villard stopped her.

As he glanced up at them absently, Marion remembered where she had seen him. It was the young man who had given her the anonymous letter.

CHAPTER IX.

MARION MEETS THE ARTIST.

As Marion was on her way to call on Dr. Brookes, Miss Everett insisted on driving her all the way to his office. Never had our heroine talked so eagerly or so pleadingly as she did with this young woman whose shallow nature so shocked and pained her. Over and over again she urged her to tell her brother all and to trust to his superior judgment in this matter of marriage to the artist.

"Oh, I beg of you to wait," she pleaded as she left her. "Evil always comes from these clandestine affections. I am sure no man can be honorable who seeks to keep such matters secret."

"Oh, Vincent is honorable, but he is eccentric," was the uneasy answer. "He is a great genius, you know; so, of course, he is peculiar. Then, just at present he is obliged to keep up appearances. But what difference will it make when I am his wife? Why, I can

snap my fingers at all these prudes who do not approve of my husband's way of courting."

"I think you are being deceived," was Marion's sad reply. "I have no faith in a courtship that is not honest and open."

As she entered the young physician's office her heart was heavy with sorrow, but one look at the loyal face of her friend made the downcast features brighten with pleasure.

The doctor was not busy, so they sat and chatted for some time, their conversation being principally about the burial of the poor woman.

"I shall wait until after you have seen St. Clair," he said, sternly. "I want to get this matter into definite shape, then he shall pay the penalty of his dastardly actions."

"And to think that he should dare to make love to Alice Everett," said Marion, who had told the doctor all. "It seems incredible that a man can be so unfeeling."

"No doubt he is only making a fool of her," said the doctor curtly. "He is a man and an artist, and a pretty face pleases him; or perhaps in his loneliness he has turned to her for comfort. Some women do not understand the nature of men—to us all, fair women are grateful, but one only is perfect."

Marion rose a little hastily with a faint blush tinging her cheeks.

"I guess it is late enough for me to venture now," she said quickly. "I confess I am most anxious to have this interview over."

"I will walk over with you," said the physician; "that is, if you will allow me, Marion."

He paused with his hat in his hand until the young girl smiled her answer.

They were soon walking up Fifth avenue toward the artist's home, the doctor chatting merrily and endeavoring to be as entertaining as possible.

"There is the house—or mansion, you might say," he said as they reached a crossing. "See, there are the windows of his studio in that northern corner."

Marion looked up at the massive pile of brick and stone, which to her country eyes seemed a veritable palace.

"St. Clair must be rich to live there," went on her companion. "They tell me he lives with only his mother and some servants."

"She brought him the house—Leonie," whispered Marion. "I have a clipping in my pocket which tells all about it. Her father, Mr. Townsend, gave it to her for a wedding present."

"And to think that the poor girl only enjoyed it for a little over a year," said the doctor as he left Marion at the foot of the brownstone steps. "Truly, she was not to be envied, with all her beauty and riches."

Marion again glanced up at the gloomy structure, with its heavily draped windows, and to save herself, could not repress a shudder.

"I dread to go in," she said, in a half whisper. "Some way, I feel a premonition about the place. I feel that I shall discover some blood-curdling secret. I suppose it is nervousness or superstition."

"It may be instinct," said Dr. Brookes, frowning. "I feel that way, too, and I can't account for it."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Marion, putting her foot on the first step. "How absurd I am to harbor such fancies! If Miss Allyn knew it she'd call me silly, and I fancy that Mr. Horton would dispense with my services instanter."

"But you must remember that you are on the track of no common story," said Dr. Brookes, gravely. "The death of that poor woman has complicated matters considerably. Why, not one of the newspapers has ever dreamed that Vincent St. Clair was a bigamist!"

"Poor Leonie," murmured Marion, with tears in her eyes. "The knowledge that I have will kill her poor mother." She held out her daintily gloved hand and the physician grasped it.

"Good-by, and good luck," he murmured, brightly. "I shall expect you to run around and tell me how you succeeded."

"I will," said Marion. "He will probably not detain me long—in fact, I shall not be surprised if he refuses to see me."

As she ascended another step she looked back again. "Somehow, I feel like saying: 'Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here,'" she said, laughing; "but as that would only prove that I'm a bit scared, I guess I'll not say it."

With a merry nod, she tripped on up the steps, leaving the doctor walking backward down the street, gazing after her tenderly.

"I really believe he thinks I am going to my doom," she said to herself, and then as she touched the electric push-button she found that her teeth were chattering.

Marion's spirits revived slightly when she was safely inside, for in spite of the dismal exterior, the reception-room looked cosy and cheerful.

The woman who admitted her was a sad, spiritless-looking creature. Her face was as expressionless as marble, and her eyes looked dull and almost sightless.

Instinctively, Marion knew that it was the artist's mother—there was no one else to be seen in the dimly-lighted hall or parlor.

In a very few moments she returned from carrying Marion's message to her son, and by a simple wave of her hand beckoned for the young girl to follow. It seemed an endless distance to the artist's studio. Marion went up two flights of stairs and passed through various wide halls and oddly-shaped apartments. Everywhere were evidences of luxurious ease. Rugs, draperies, divans, were scattered about in what seemed to Marion the most extraordinary profusion.

At last the woman drew aside a heavy portiere with one swoop of her arm, and with a motion of her hand indicated that Marion was to enter.

The curtain fell back with a gentle swish, and for an instant the young girl stood motionless in the magnificent studio, endeavoring with all the force of her will power to control her feelings.

"You wish to engage yourself as a model, do you, miss?" suddenly queried a voice at her side.

Marion turned quickly to confront a man of some thirty years, his long hair rumpled, his eyes bloodshot and hollow, standing, palette in hand, on the thick rug beside her.

As she turned, the full glow from a skylight over her head bathed her beautiful face. If ever she looked as Leonie St. Clair, she did at that moment. There was a hoarse, inarticulate cry from the man beside her:

"My God! Leonie!" he whispered as he staggered back. Then, to Marion's horror, he suddenly burst out laughing.

CHAPTER X.

MARION IS MADE A PRISONER.

"You must pardon me for being a bit hysterical, miss," said Vincent St. Clair, in a soft, purring voice, when he had finally succeeded in controlling his blood-curdling laughter.

"It is not often that my feelings overcome me in this manner, but you are so like to my poor, dear, absent wife, and the shock was too great for me, I fancy!"

He was scrutinizing Marion keenly as he spoke, his glance flitting over her from her head to her feet in a manner that betokened some extraordinary interest.

"Come right in and I will talk to you," he said, in the same purring tone. "Here, take this chair—under the skylight, if you please," he added hastily.

As Marion sank into the chair he drew another very near her, and sat down on the edge of it, still holding the palette.

"I thought you might need a model," murmured the young girl, bravely. Her spirits were beginning to rally, as they always did in emergencies.

"I do, indeed!" cried the artist, springing up. He was too thoroughly restless to sit still as he talked to her.

"I am painting a great picture—a masterpiece!" he exclaimed, proudly. "No man before me has ever attempted such a subject!"

He threw back his head and breathed hard as he spoke, his nostrils dilating in a curious manner.

As he talked, he paced back and forth, gesticulating with both arms and running his fingers through the long, thick locks on his temples.

"It is a picture that will make my name famous to the uttermost ends of the earth. Neither Murillo, Rubens, nor any of the great masters will compare with me!" he cried, passionately.

"It must be magnificent," murmured the young girl, soothingly. "Oh, how proud I would be if I could pose for any part of it!"

The shrewd touch of eagerness in her words produced a telling effect, for in an in-

stant the man was again at her side, scrutinizing her features closely.

"The very face—the hair, the skin—everything," he muttered, eagerly. "Oh, such models are rare! My good angel must have sent you!"

"Perhaps she did," murmured Marion, but the words almost scorched her lips. It seemed as a sacrilege to hear this man claim the protection of a guardian angel. For, while she was forced to admit that he was not unattractive in appearance, the knowledge of his double life and of his treachery made her shudder at sight of him. It was somewhat like to gazing upon a fairly pleasant mask, behind which one could see the hideous features of a monster.

"And you will give me a sitting now, will you not?" asked the artist, eagerly. "Right away, to-day? Oh, do not refuse me!"

His voice was pleading and his manner almost caressing. Surely this man would be successful with far wiser women than poor Alice.

Marion bit her lips, and her heart seemed to stand still for a minute. She knew that she must be cautious with this man. It would not be well for her to make rash promises.

"But I must know something of the picture," she said, a little sternly. "What is the pose—the subject? I am entirely new to the business, and would not dream of undertaking everything."

A cunning gleam crept into the artist's eyes as she spoke. His face paled a little, as though he feared she would disappoint him.

"May I see the picture?" asked Marion, bravely. "It can certainly do no harm, as I will never speak of it if you wish it."

Before he answered, the artist turned and began pacing the floor; as he walked, he muttered constantly, but in too low a voice for his guest to be able to understand him. That he was laboring under some intense excitement was plainly evident; there was no occasion for such extraordinary nervousness.

Suddenly he turned around and stood staring at her fixedly, and just at that instant she heard him whisper:

"I must risk it! I must risk it!"

"You need not be at all afraid of me," she hastened to say. "I would never dream of telling a professional secret. I merely wish to see the picture to judge for myself whether I ought to pose for it."

"Come!"

The artist beckoned to her as he whispered the word.

Marion rose from her chair and followed him swiftly.

There was another short flight of steps and another corridor, both so richly carpeted that not a footfall could be distinguished.

At the end of the corridor was a curious door. It seemed far too heavily paneled for the rest of the woodwork.

The artist opened it quickly and stepped with a light motion to one side. As the young girl passed it she was met by a half-stifling odor.

The room was a small studio, the walls almost entirely concealed by pictures, and besides a skylight overhead, it contained one of the curiously shaped windows which she had noticed from the sidewalk.

There was no furniture in the room except a wide divan of purple velvet, the rich color glowing at that instant beneath the full glow of midday.

An easel, with a carefully covered canvas, stood in the centre of the room, and toward this the artist moved with an enraptured expression upon his countenance.

"He is an enthusiast, certainly," thought Marion as she watched him. "No wonder that the model in the car spoke of him as a crank. His excitement is awful! It is almost unnatural!"

Her reflections were cut short by the artist's next move.

He had suddenly, with a swift movement, swept aside the curtain.

Marion gave a sharp cry, and her eyes dilated wildly. She took a step forward, straining her gaze toward the picture.

"Great Heaven! How horrible!" she half ejaculated. Then the daring subject held her senses spellbound.

On a wide, purple divan a young woman lay in the throes of death. Her limbs were convulsed, her features drawn and distorted.

There was beauty and horror in every line of the youthful form, for each was enhanced by the presence of the other. Underneath, in

gold letters, were the words: "The Last Lover." Death was claiming this beautiful, unwilling victim.

It was a fascinating study, but Marion could not endure it. Like one suddenly waking from a frightful dream, she raised her hands before her eyes to shut out the vision.

The next moment she remembered her obligation to the artist. She looked around quickly, only to find that he had vanished.

"That is strange," she murmured, with a sickening sensation at her heart.

She took a step forward, and with an almost involuntary motion dropped the curtain back over the dreadful picture.

"I could never, never pose for a thing like that!" she said, decidedly, as she put her hand on the door that led from the studio.

Then a shudder shook her frame from head to foot. The door was locked! She had been made a prisoner!

CHAPTER XI.

A DESPERATE ACTION.

For a few minutes the young girl did not fully realize her position. She felt confident that it must have been a blunder, and that the artist would shortly return and liberate her.

She looked at her watch. It was half-past twelve. In an hour she had hoped to be reporting her success to the doctor.

"I'll give him a chance to come back," she said to herself; "but if he isn't here soon I shall scream like an Indian!"

Then it occurred to her that it would be of no use. The walls were so thick and so heavily draped that unless a person was just outside the door they could not possibly hear a sound from her.

"It can't be that he has done it on purpose," she whispered over and over. "Why, no man in his sane and sober senses would dream of such a thing! The idea of locking me for a moment in this room! It is an outrage! No sane man would dare to do it!"

But was Vincent St. Clair in his "sane and sober senses?" She asked herself the question, and then stood quite still as she answered it.

The wild restlessness in his manner, the feverish light in his eyes! Was it all the result of ambition, the eccentricity of genius; or, was it—she shuddered as it came to her—the frenzy of insanity?

A moment more and all waiting was over. She began pounding on the door and calling for liberation.

A slight cough astonished her, coming, as it did, from the direction of the divan behind her.

She turned in amazement and confronted the sad-faced woman who had admitted her to the mansion.

"Why, how did you get here?" asked Marion in astonishment. "Is it possible that there is another door to this studio?"

The woman did not answer. She was setting a tray, loaded with refreshments, on the corner of the divan.

"Who is that for?" asked Marion, sharply, as she walked directly up to her.

"You," answered the woman in a half-frightened whisper.

"But I don't care for it, thanks—I wish to go home," said Marion, firmly. "Mr. St. Clair has gone away and locked the door behind him. I am at a loss to understand such ungentlemanly conduct."

"He has a caller. He begged me to excuse him," said the woman, faintly.

She had placed her tray safely, and now stood with her arms folded, waiting.

"But why did he lock me in here?" asked Marion, a little more gently. "Is that his way of treating his visitors?"

"You came as a model, and he engaged you," was the woman's answer. "The door has a spring lock. No doubt he forgot it."

Marion looked at her sharply and a sudden idea flitted through her mind. Perhaps through this sphinx-like creature she could learn something of the artist.

"You are very kind to bring me some luncheon," she said, sweetly. "Do sit down by me on the divan and tell me about this great man and his pictures."

She sank down as she spoke and beckoned her companion to sit beside her, but with something much like a shudder the woman moved away from her.

"Not there! I'll not sit there!" she said, with a gesture of horror.

"Well, there's nothing else to sit on," said Marion, a little dubiously; "but perhaps we can go to some other apartment?"

A gleam of cunning lit up the woman's dull eyes.

"Not yet," she said, quickly. "Wait—I think he's coming!"

Marion sprang from the divan and rushed to the door. She meant to dart from the room the moment opportunity offered.

A soft rustle of skirts made her look around. She was alone once more with the awful picture, and only the tray of luncheon to prove that she had been visited.

The young girl set her teeth hard when she saw how she had been duped. There was no further doubt in her mind now that she had been imprisoned purposely.

She rushed over to the window, but found she could not raise it, and as she gazed out anxiously she saw only the roofs of the neighboring buildings. Then she began a careful scrutiny of the walls of the studio, peering behind the pictures, and even moving them about in her desperate search for the secret entrance.

"It's a regular trick room, like some I have read about," she whispered, finally. "There is not a door in sight. Oh, this is perfectly horrible!"

A full half hour she searched for the secret entrance, and by that time she was thoroughly frightened and exhausted. She nibbled a bit of cracker and ate a few bits of chicken that were on the tray, then raised a glass of wine in her hand and looked at it carefully.

"It is the first time I ever was tempted to drink wine," she whispered, shivering. "Oh, I wonder why it is that all my courage has deserted me!"

It was a position which would have alarmed any woman, yet this brave girl censured herself severely that she should feel so much frightened.

She was a prisoner in the home of this eccentric artist—a man whom she knew to be unscrupulous in his dealings, and whom she firmly believed to be on the brink of insanity.

She set the glass of wine down feebly and drank some water instead. She could feel that her brow was becoming heated and feverish, and a feeling of faintness was fast overcoming her.

"It is the air of this room—its odor is awful!" she gasped; "and to think that the window cannot be opened."

She looked at the divan, which was wide and comfortable, and as her head was now swimming she felt obliged to lie down on it.

"I won't close my eyes," she whispered, doggedly; "I'll just keep on the lookout as sharp as possible, though it isn't at all probable that he intends to harm me."

For about five minutes the beautiful gray eyes were strained wide open, then a gradual faintness stole over her senses, and with a shudder of agony they closed in unconsciousness.

Five minutes later the door was softly opened and a figure stole into the room. It was Vincent St. Clair, his eyes more bloodshot than ever.

There was a cunning smile on his lips as he tiptoed cautiously over to the divan and peered down into the face of the unconscious maiden.

"Bah! She has not touched it!" he whispered, raising the glass of wine. "She has only fainted! I must wait a little longer!"

As he stole softly from the room Marion stirred uneasily. As the door clicked behind him she opened her eyes and stared about her.

"Help! Save me!" she murmured in a dreamy whisper, then clasped both hands over her face and trembled violently.

"He was here! I feel it!" she cried, springing up suddenly. "He peered into my face with his burning eyes! Oh, I am positive now that he intends some mischief!"

She glanced at the tray, and then for a moment the blood almost forsook her heart. The glass of wine had been moved—evidently to examine its contents.

With a sharp sob of horror, Marion grasped the situation. It had come to her as a flash what the artist was endeavoring to accomplish, and this sudden knowledge brought to her a hideous revelation.

"Great Heaven! I understand it now!" she cried out, chokingly. "He is trying to poison me with that glass of drugged wine, then he would paint me as I suffered, and thus satisfy his horrible ambition!"

With one bound she reached the canvas and tore away the curtain.

The distorted face of the beautiful maiden was again before her gaze, and as she looked closer and closer she commenced to detect the familiar features of poor, missing Leonie.

As a flash, the whole dastardly thing was revealed to her, and she clenched her hands and almost groaned in agony. This young wife had been poisoned in her own beautiful home, and her dying struggles had been portrayed on canvas by no other hand than that of her mad artist husband!

Marion's breath came in gasps for the space of a minute. It was plain that she was doomed. She must do something desperate. There was a pencil and paper in the pocket of her gown. She scribbled a note and tied it with her handkerchief to the heavy goblet on the tray, then with her strong, young arm hurled it violently through the window.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOCTOR'S CALLER.

Dr. Reginald Brookes had hardly returned to his office after leaving Marion at the artist's door when he received a caller, who seemed strangely excited.

He was a slightly built young man, well dressed, and of genteel appearance, and in an instant the physician knew that his errand was not an ordinary one.

"My name is Villard," began the young man as soon as he entered, "and I have come to ask you the particulars of Mrs. Dent's death. I understand from the undertaker that you were with her in her last moments."

"On the contrary," said the doctor, sadly, "I arrived there too late. There was no one with her when she died but a friend of mine —a Miss Marlowe."

"What! not Miss Marion Marlowe, the reporter!" exclaimed the young man, sharply.

The doctor smiled faintly.

"I believe she is a reporter," he said, very slowly; "but I understand that she has held the position only two days—in fact, she was on her first assignment when Mrs. Dent's boy attracted her attention and told her of his mother's condition."

"And she went to her—a stranger—and remained with her until she died!" exclaimed the young man, in astonishment.

"Miss Marlowe is full of good works. She is the soul of kindliness," was the physician's answer; "but pardon me, are you a relative or friend of Mrs. Dent's, and is there any information that I can give you?"

"I am a—a friend," was the slightly hesitating answer. "I knew Mrs. Dent at her home in England. She had important papers —did Miss Marlowe see them?"

"I have them," said the doctor, evasively, "and I must refuse to give them up. There are one or two matters that will have to be straightened out, and if you are her friend, I shall be pleased to consult with you about them."

"But, how does it happen that you are interested?" asked the young man, quickly. "The undertaker tells me that you have made yourself responsible for the burial."

Dr. Brookes smiled again, this time very pleasantly.

"I happen to be a police surgeon, for one thing," was the answer, "and there is something in this woman's life that directly concerns another. In other words, her marriage certificate, if proven valid, will give the police authorities a clue to an important mystery—it will explain, or help explain, the disappearance of Leonie St. Clair, the wife of the artist who lives on Fifth avenue."

"Ah! you have learned her secret! You know who she was!" exclaimed the young man, delightedly. "Then the seal of silence can be raised from my lips!"

A smile swept over his features, lighting and brightening them wonderfully.

"She has left the history of her life as well as the certificate," said Dr. Brookes, "and I have already cabled to her old home to see if her statements can be verified."

"You did not need to do that, sir; but I thank you for your kindness!" cried the young man, gratefully. "You see, it is this way: Mrs. Dent was my sister! Oh, it is positively dreadful how I have been forced to keep silence in this matter!"

He began pacing the floor excitedly, and talking with great rapidity.

"I saw them married, my sister and Vincent St. Clair; she was only a child—he was

ten years her senior. I was only a boy, but I warned her then—I told her he was a man without heart, soul or conscience. His whole aim in life was to paint great pictures; he was a slave to pride, to avarice and ambition! When he finally deserted her I would have followed him, but there was no one left to support her or her baby. When we did come to this country we came together; but we were too late. In his greed he had married a young girl for her money! I have tried to help my poor sister to bear her burden, but she was proud—so proud that she even refused my money—and she died in poverty. Oh, my poor, poor sister!"

Dr. Brookes rose sympathetically and put his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"She made me promise to keep silent," he muttered savagely, "for the sake of poor Leonie, whom she pitied deeply. For the sake of this poor girl she made me swear not to reveal her secret."

"She was a good woman," said the doctor, with a heavy sigh. "Few wives and mothers would make that sacrifice for another."

"She was a poor, weak girl!" cried the young man, hotly. "It was unjust to herself! Only God knows how she suffered!"

"Well, it is over now, and the day of retribution is at hand," said the doctor, sternly, as he went over to his desk and took out the dead woman's papers. "You must prove your identity to me first," he said, kindly, "then we will consult together on what shall be done with the artist."

In a very few moments Mr. Villard proved his assertions, naming the contents of the certificate, as well as many of the facts contained in his sister's carefully written story.

"Now," said the doctor when they had concluded their short consultation, "we will only wait for Miss Marlowe to return, and then we will put our knowledge before the proper authorities." Mr. Villard gave him a questioning glance, which the doctor at once knew referred to Miss Marlowe.

"She has gone to interview St. Clair," he said, shortly; then as he glanced at his watch he gave a quick whistle. "It's time she was back! Come, we'll go and meet her!" he said abruptly. "I'm as eager as you are to get this matter settled."

"It cannot harm Leonie now," said young Villard, earnestly, "and my sister's honor must be vindicated. She has a right to be buried as Vincent St. Clair's wife—for Donald's sake, I must insist upon it!"

"Donald is to stay with me, if you have no objections," said the physician, quickly. Tom Villard turned and held his hand out gratefully.

"I will relieve you of the responsibility when you wish it," he said, "and I thank you for offering the boy a position."

They walked hastily up Fifth avenue in the direction of the artist's home, the doctor growing more and more uneasy as he saw nothing of Marion.

As the outlines of the magnificent residence came in view, young Villard's brow darkened and he ground his teeth angrily.

"The man of all men whom I have most cause to hate," he said, hoarsely, as he stared up at the studio windows; "for he not only wrecked my poor sister's life, but he has embittered mine by his continued villainy—he has stolen my sweetheart—the woman I loved and had hoped to marry."

"You mean Alice Everett, do you not?" asked the doctor, quickly.

There was just a second before the young man answered, for his gaze was still riveted on the studio window. Suddenly there was a faint crash of glass far above their heads, then something—a goblet, with a paper tied to it—struck the pavement just ahead of them.

"My God! It is a message from some one who is imprisoned in that place!" cried Villard. "Is it possible that Leonie, his wronged wife, is still living!"

Dr. Brookes sprang forward and snatched up the note. His face was of ashen hue, and his hands trembled as he opened it.

"Quick! Save me! I am imprisoned and in danger of my life!" it read. "Vincent St. Clair is mad, and I am locked in his studio."

The note was signed by Marion Marlowe.

For just a second the two men stared at each other, then Dr. Brookes gave one glance up at the broken window.

"Oh, Marion! Marion!" he muttered under his breath. "Have courage, darling! I am coming to save you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

LEONIE IS FOUND AT LAST.

After Marion had hurled the note through the glass she stood by the broken window a moment. The air revived her, and she began to think more calmly. No doubt the mad artist would soon return, and she endeavored to think by what means she could best outwit him.

The picture on the easel held an unaccountable fascination for her now, inasmuch as it portrayed her own intended doom—the doom which this madman had so deliberately planned for her.

"Poor, poor Leonie!" she moaned, wringing her hands in agony. "To think that you, poor child, should be the victim of such a monster! In this beautiful prison you were murdered by him! I have not a doubt on the subject—you were cruelly poisoned!"

She stared at the picture, endeavoring to read every line of the hideously distorted face. After a little time she became strangely calm and thoughtful.

"That is not death," she whispered, finally; "that is only hideous, horible suffering! Leonie did not die—if she had, the picture would be finished!"

A ray of hope had shot through her brain. Leonie was not dead—she felt it—she knew it.

Through the heavy walls she heard a first, faint sound. She ran over to the door and put her ear to the keyhole.

"Oh, if I could only get out and search for her," she murmured, sadly, for already she was beginning to feel less fear on her own account than Leonie's.

There were unmistakable sounds coming to her now of a disturbance of some sort, and with bated breath Marion stood motionless and listened.

Nearly half an hour had elapsed since she threw the message through the window. It was possible that it had been found; deliverance might be coming at that moment.

Suddenly a horrible shriek reached her overstrained ears; it came, choked and muffled, yet blood-curdling in its fierceness.

There were voices, high-pitched and angry, in the corridor outside. Without another moment of waiting the young girl cried aloud for deliverance.

As her first cry died away she felt a hand upon the door; it trembled slightly, and then flew violently open.

"Thank Heaven you are safe!"

It was Dr. Brookes who spoke. He had caught Marion in his arms and was straining her to his bosom.

"We must save her—Leonie!" gasped the brave girl, quickly. "She is here in this house—I am almost sure of it!"

As the doctor led her out into the corridor Marion stared wide-eyed befor her. It was a sight so terrible that her blood seemed to stop flowing for a minute.

The artist was sitting on a chair, bound hand and foot. He was gibbering idiotically; he had become stark, raving mad.

Two men stood near him with grim, determined faces, while a third, a young man, whom Marion recognized instantly as Tom Villard, was bending over the artist's mother, who was crouching in a corner.

"At last!—she admits it at last!" cried Villard, just as Marion came up. "Leonie is living! She is in this house! She has known all along that her son was crazy, but because she feared him she has kept this infamous secret!"

"Oh, I knew she was not dead!" cried Marion delightedly. "He poisoned her and then painted her as she was suffering in agony! Come! I'll show you the picture!" she cried, starting back toward the studio. "He tried to poison me—if I had died, it would have been finished!"

For a moment her wild words could hardly be understood. Then Dr. Brookes beckoned to the two men, who were officers in plain clothing, and the three followed Marion to the little studio.

There was no mistaking the hideous picture, and as Marion talked rapidly and eagerly, she pointed to the glass of wine that still stood on the tray on one corner of the velvet divan.

"We will take this along," said one of the officers; "but the picture we can't touch—the chief will have to come here and see it!"

"We will make a thorough search of the premises later," said Dr. Brookes earnestly.

"Just now our duty is to find that poor girl—if the artist's mother is sufficiently cowed, she will no doubt lead us to her."

St. Clair was still chattering foolishly and becoming more harmless every minute, so they left him securely bound while they followed the now thoroughly frightened woman.

In a small, prison-like room they discovered Leonie St. Clair. She was as white as a corpse from her long incarceration. Marion entered first, the tears streaming down her face; but at the first whisper of freedom, poor, weak Leonie fainted.

"It is more merciful," whispered Dr. Brookes, as he bent anxiously over her. "When she wakes it shall be in a brighter room. Lead the way!" he cried to the woman as he raised the fair girl tenderly.

An hour later the Townsend mansion was the scene of joyous excitement. Leonie had been found and Marion Marlowe had found her.

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried the poor mother as her darling was brought in and laid in her arms. "I knew she was not dead! My heart would not believe it!"

Marion Marlowe only waited to see what was to be done with the mad artist and his mother, then she hurried down to the *Star* office to write her story.

In another hour it must be in type. She wrote with all her might, throwing her whole soul into the tragedy.

An "Extra" of the *Star* told it all in glowing terms. It was a genuine "beat" of all the papers, besides being an unusually thrilling story.

At last the mystery of Leonie's disappearance was solved and the true character of the artist was made public in all its repulsiveness.

He had been insane at intervals for a number of years, but through her love for him his mother had remained silent until from the horror of it all she, too, became demented.

The cunning of his insanity had turned to his art. His ambition to be great had become an absolute mania.

He had poisoned Leonie exactly as Marion guessed, but the drug was not of sufficient power. After suffering horribly she had rallied.

After committing so dastardly a deed he was forced to protect himself, and with the cunning "method of madness" he planned the whole story of the disappearance, even to dragging the name of Oliver Dayton into the affair, when that young man was absolutely innocent.

Mr. Villard apologized to Marion for the anonymous letter, which he claimed to have written under intense excitement. He proved his sister's right to be buried as the wife of St. Clair, and Leonie was the first to uphold him when she heard the story.

Her sufferings and wrongs kept her ill for many months, but by the time she was again her beautiful self her mad husband was in his grave, where he could never harm her.

The mother recovered and was sent back to England. She was amply provided for, but did not live long after.

The whole fearful story shocked no one more than it did Alice Everett. It seemed to transform her almost instantly into a sober, thoughtful woman.

Tom Villard's sufferings touched her heart at last, and only a few weeks later Marion was invited to their wedding.

As for Howard Everett and the doctor, they worked on manfully, both loving the beautiful girl who had proven herself so noble and brave, but never wounding her by a whisper of undesired affection.

"Now, what will I do next?" asked Marion of Miss Allyn that night. She was still pale with the horror of her day's adventure.

"Whatever you do, you do well," was the serious, but smiling answer. "Why, Marion, that story was magnificently written, and to think you had the coolness to write it up after such a brain-turning adventure!"

"I seem to be fated to have such experiences," was the beautiful girl's reply; "but, oh, I don't mind the danger to myself! I am so overjoyed at the rescue of Leonie!"

"I believe you would go through fire and water to help another," cried Miss Allyn, proudly. "Oh, how glad I am that you are my friend, Marion."

There was another surprise for Marion the next day, for she learned through Mr. Townsend himself that the reward was to be divided.

Dr. Brookes, Mr. Villard and herself were to be the recipients, but the police were well paid for their time and trouble.

Thus Marion's work as a reporter was doubly rewarded, for besides being paid handsomely for her thrilling story, she received five thousand dollars, which was to her a small fortune.

Marion, having in her possession such a large sum of money, our readers will no doubtedly be interested in knowing to what use she put it. This will be told in No. 7 of MY QUEEN, "Marion Marlowe's Money; or, Brave Work in the Slums."

[THE END.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department will be made a special feature of this publication. It will be conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, will be much appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers, who need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and never refuse her assistance or sympathy. STREET & SMITH.

"I have the good fortune or bad fortune to be courted by two young men at the same time. One of them loves me dearly and the other certainly values my society very highly. Number one has not got much money, but he spends all he can on me, and is always looking out for my welfare. Number two has more money than he knows what to do with, and I enjoy going out with him because he can purchase every comfort for me that can possibly be obtained. Number one always seems glad when I have had an enjoyable evening with the other, but I know he is unhappy when I am not with him. Ought I to go without pleasure simply because he cannot afford to give it to me where their is some one else who can? "BESSIE S. T."

You have hardly told us enough of these young men's characters for us to be able to judge between them. You seem to regret leaving "Number one" alone and unhappy. So far as Grace Shirley can decide the thing for you to do is to consider whether the pleasure you obtain with "Number two" repays you for your regret, and also repays "Number one" for his unhappiness. If it does not, and the devotion of "Number one" would recompense you for the good times that the money of "Number two" can purchase, it is evident that you would be happier with the former. Your own state of mind must decide this matter for you.

"Do you think it wrong to accept the attentions of a young man whom you have never met before when you are out for a long ride on a bicycle? I frequently meet young men who treat me to a luncheon or ice cream at some road house when I am riding, but I am always afraid to tell my mother that I have made such an acquaintance. MINNIE B."

We cannot say that we approve of indiscriminate acquaintances such as you describe. No girl should allow herself to accept favors from a man whom she does not know and whom she is afraid to speak of to her mother. The bicycle, or the fad for riding one, has been responsible for a great many serious evils. It tends to make young people too free with each other, and brings a young girl in contact with some very undesirable acquaintances.

"Will you kindly settle a question which is giving me much uneasiness? I believe that Bryan will be our next President, and my husband says he will not, and then he gets angry and says that a woman should not talk politics. What would you do if you were in my place? I have my own opinions and I want to express them. Mrs. G."

It is very unwise to argue politics with a man—it is the subject which, next to religion, causes the most family ruptures. Still, if your husband is so confident in his views we should think he might humor you, especially as, having no vote, your opinions will not alter the outcome. We should have very little respect for a woman who did not have her opinions, and perhaps some day your husband will learn to respect them. Men have been a long time in learning that all silence is not golden, and that there is much to be learned from an intelligent woman.

"I have read your letters to others, and cannot resist asking you to please answer one for me. Do you think it is wrong to read novels on Sunday? My parents say it is, and wish me to read nothing but Sunday-school books and the Bible, and I find the former very stupid and the latter very uninteresting, while many parts of it are shocking. Do you think the average novel would be worse than what I am reading? L. C."

We do not think it necessary for you to confine yourself to the perusal of books which you find "stupid" and "shocking." A book that is fit to be read on Monday or Tuesday is fit to be read on Sunday, and there are hundreds and thousands of books that you could read that would be of great benefit to you whatever day you read them. You have only to look on the news stands and in the public libraries to find any number of books for Sunday reading that could not possibly offend any sensible, intelligent parent.

"Do you think it is improper for a girl to eat luncheon with a male friend? I have a very good friend, a gentleman nearly forty years old, and I frequently call at his office and we go to lunch together. Sometimes we return to his office afterward, and we stay there until it is time to close

and then go up-town together. I have been censured for this by my brother, who says that I am very foolish to be seen with a man in a down-town restaurant. Please let me have the benefit of your advice. FANNIE F. B."

Your brother's ideas on this subject meet with our entire approval. While a woman may very properly eat luncheon at a down-town restaurant in company with a business man, it should be because she is there on account of business and not for the sake of pastime. Your calls on this man seem to be purely social, and while you are doubtless perfectly innocent of a desire to do wrong your action is not well advised. It will injure the reputation of any young girl to be seen about a man's office during business hours, provided she has no legitimate business there, and he is not a near relative. Furthermore, no good business man mixes pleasure with matters of sterner importance, and your friend cannot be very substantial or reliable if he invites you to call upon him at times when he should be giving his entire attention to other things.

Grace Shirley would advise you to cease calling on this man at his office and insist upon his calling on you at your home instead if he wishes to see you.

"I frequently go to the theatre with a young man who always wants me to go to supper afterward. I have gone with him to a restaurant once or twice, but when we do I seldom get home before one o'clock or later. My father storms about my coming in so late, but I certainly do enjoy our cozy little supper after the play. Is there any harm in my continuing to do this? I can't see anything wrong in it myself, but would like your advice. MATTIE S. K."

There is nothing wrong in the simple act of eating a bite of supper after the theatre, but we do think that late hours are very undesirable for young girls, and your father is quite right.

"I am distressed in mind, and I beg that you will help me! My lover and I have had a bitter quarrel and all because I say that McKinley will be re-elected. Have I not a right to my opinion? I have a far better education than my lover has, and as my father is a politician I have made politics a study. If I were a voter I would vote for McKinley, not that I admire him personally, but I object to free silver. KITTY C."

It is a great pity that lovers should quarrel over something that neither of them can assist or prevent. One vote will not elect either candidate for the Presidency, so your bitter words will be worse than wasted.

Can you not learn to disagree amicably on such trivial subjects? The President will be chosen as usual by the people, and thus far no one of them has done any particular damage. Why not join hands in hoping for the best man to win, and accept the outcome in the most graceful spirit. There are too many subjects more important to a young couple on the verge of matrimony—why waste valuable time in arguing politics?

"Will you kindly answer the following question? Can two people live comfortably on twelve dollars a week? I am engaged to be married to a young man who earns eight dollars a week while I earn four. By putting our salaries together, do you think we could live in comfort? M. C."

We do not approve of marriage on a financial basis. You do not mention in your letter whether you love the young man or not. We shall have to hear your sentiments and his, also, on this subject before advising you. If you really wish Grace Shirley's advice, you must tell me your age, your expectations and ambitions.

"Miss Shirley has answered so many letters from girls in so kindly a way that I feel sure she will be willing to give a man the benefit of her wisdom. I have been calling on a young lady for two years, and, while I have really nothing to complain of, I feel that I have utterly failed to interest her. She is nice to me, but never seems to prefer my society to that of any one else, and my presence or absence seems a matter regarding which she is perfectly indifferent. Can you suggest a way in which I can arouse her interest in my sincere attentions? JAMES D. F."

The young lady, we should judge, is as yet "heart whole and fancy free." The only way we can suggest by means of which the interest of another can be aroused is by making yourself of value to her. If you can make yourself essential to a woman, make your presence to an extent indispensible, then you will arouse her interest and have the chance of that interest being centered upon yourself to the exclusion of others.

So long as you are only one of the average type, so long as you do not find any attention to show her that other men have not shown, you cannot expect her to care any more for you than she does for them.

Make a place for yourself and keep it. Then this young woman will some day realize that you are necessary to her existence to an extent. Whether she will even then have any affection for you is a problem. Love never goes where it is driven, and seldom where it is coaxed.

"I have accepted the attentions of a young man for three years to the almost total exclusion of other society. During all this time, while he has often talked to me affectionately, he has never spoken of marriage. It does seem to me that it is about time he married me if he intends to at all. Would it be unwomanly in me to speak to him on the subject? CLARA W."

No, indeed, it would not be at all unwomanly. Let your suitor realize that you respect your own womanhood too much to allow him or any other man to play fast and loose with you. The young man is probably afraid to assume the responsibilities of married life. Let him realize fully how small you think he is to absorb all your time and be unwilling to state his intentions candidly and freely. The man who will ask a woman to give to him all the companionship of her younger years without her receiving anything in return is a

poor sort of a man. We do not advise you to look out for a suitor who will marry speedily by any means, for you do not want to marry until you are sure that you have found the man whom you love and who loves you. In the meantime, keep aloof from any entangling companionship and preserve your own dignity and self-respect.

"Will you do me the favor to answer a question which is disturbing me a great deal at present? I am keeping company with a young man and hope to marry him, but he says when we marry I must give up my work and let him support me. Now, he only earns ten dollars a week, while I earn twelve. Do you think I ought to give up a good position and deny myself the comforts which my own salary, added to his, would bring me? A. T. C."

If you are earning a good salary and are satisfied with it we do not see why so poor a young man as your lover should object to your working. If he cannot give you as much as you can make he certainly should place no obstacle in the way of your working. At any rate, you are free to make your own choice. Independence and twelve dollars per week are certainly worth considering.

"My sister and myself work in a department store on small salaries. We have very few friends, and live by ourselves. It is pretty hard work for us to get along. I have a friend, a young man whom we have both known since we were children. He has a good position in an office and he has repeatedly tried to make me presents of money. I have always heard that it was dishonorable for a woman to accept a present of money from a man. My friend says that I am foolish and that I might as well take the money and buy something I need as to have him spend it for candy, etc. Do you think he is right?

"Dorothy A. M."

We judge that the young man is a very kindly, sensible fellow. A woman if she accepts presents from men friends at all might as well accept what is of some use to her. This young fellow evidently is more anxious to have you provided with clothes and food than anything else, and he shows his good sense. It is the spirit in which a gift is tendered that makes it honorable or dishonorable. Some men would give you candy in a manner as would make you regret having accepted it.

"Kindly advise me by one of your letters what to do in this case: I am to be married in a fortnight to a man whom I dearly love, but whom I have never taken into my entire confidence. I am obliged to support a little sister, and if I give up my own position to marry my fiance he will be obliged to support her in the future. I am afraid to tell him this for fear he will break the engagement. Am I acting dishonorably in not telling him the truth and taking the consequences? Eva B."

We cannot understand how you could possibly dream of marrying a young man and imposing such a burden upon him unless you knew that he was willing to accept it. Tell him the facts in the case at once. We should not blame him for being very indignant at your silence.

"I have been married for three years. The first two were the happiest of my life, and my husband was devotion itself. During the past twelve months he has spent almost every night out, and I have had many lonely, sad evenings. We have no children, and I have no interest in the world except in him. Please advise me how I can induce him to spend his evenings with me. Whenever I talk to him about it he gets angry.

"Mrs. Adeline D. W."

We are not surprised that your husband got angry. No amount of argument or coaxing will make a man stay at home if other quarters are more congenial. The plan for you to pursue is to interest yourself deeply in your husband's affairs; talk to him about his business, his horse, his bicycle or whatever he is most interested in. Try to make yourself so entertaining to him that he will forget that there is any other place in the world but his home, and any other person on earth but you. Then you will have won your victory over other attractions, and your husband will wonder why he ever wanted to stay away from you for an hour.

"I am in deep distress, my dear Miss Shirley, and am coming to you to help me out of my troubles. I am in love with a young man who seems to be a flirt. It seems impossible for him to see a pretty girl without smiling at her, and he frequently tries to get introductions to others. If he cared for me would he do this, Miss Shirley? I love him so dearly that I suppose I am jealous. I do not want to be unreasonable, but I am very unhappy. Ida."

It seems to be a failing among the young people nowadays to not know their own minds. Fickleness is epidemic in the universe, if one's observation is to be trusted. Perhaps your lover is only a weak, susceptible fellow, and if this is the case, it is well for you to know it before you marry him. On the other hand, his actions may be only demonstrations of regard for the sex, and if out of the entire list of pretty girls that he knows he has chosen you to be his life companion then we would advise you to overlook his natural homage to the others. When a man loves one pretty, sweet-dispositioned girl it makes him feel kindly toward all the rest, and it is nothing against a man that he loves all women provided that this wholesale affection does not detract for the degree of love which he feels from his chosen one.

"Please tell me what you would do if you were in my place. I am only sixteen and my husband is eighteen. We have been married a year and have a little baby. My husband is out of work and we are both very near crazy. Ought I to put my baby in a nursery and go out to day's work, or should I go home to my father, who is both willing and able to support me, but who declares he will not support my husband. My husband was earning nine dollars a week when I married him.

"Bessie G."

If your father allowed his fifteen-year-old daughter to marry a boy of seventeen who was only

earning nine dollars a week, he ought to be willing to support you both now that dark days have come upon you. The willingness with which some parents part with their children is little less than criminal. We would not advise you to go out to work, nor would we advise you to put your baby in a nursery. A woman who is wife and mother should demand protection from her husband. If he cannot support her then let her go to her parents, whose carelessness regarding her welfare has helped to place her in the wretched position which you mention. When your husband gets work you can go back and live with him.

"I am so sick at heart that I can hardly smile; so please, Miss Shirley, to answer this letter! I have been in love for two years, and now I am disconsolate! The young man that I adore has married another. We were engaged for over a year, and I have a hundred of his letters all saying that he loves me and speaking in ardent tones of our marriage. Would you advise me to begin suit for breach of promise? I understand that he has a little money. E. C. V."

Poor child! Your letter shows that you are in a dreadful state of mind! Can you not see that it was better for the blow to come now? Just think how dreadful it would have been if he had waited until after you were married and then suddenly decided that he loved another! Your suggestion about the "breach of promise" suit is very disgusting, and we are loth to believe that you really meant it. The woman who airs her love disappointments in the public courts is sadly lacking in womanly modesty, and to look to money as a recompense for love is to admit that you were never really cognizant of true affection. We advise you to hide your secret and try to overcome your hopeless attachment. There are other young men who are just as worthy, and no doubt the day will come when you can look back upon this sorrow and see that it was in reality a blessing.

"I am reading 'My Queen' every week, and enjoy it immensely. I am a country girl myself, so I can appreciate 'Marion Marlowe.' I think there are a great many girls like Marion, only without her beauty. Do you think that it is harder for a very pretty girl to get along in a big city than it is for a homely one? Are there more temptations offered a pretty girl, and is it more difficult for her to win respect from others? GRACE S. C."

We are very glad that you are reading "My Queen," and that you like the series. Yes, we are sure that pretty girls have more temptations than homely girls, and they also have more opportunities and advantages. Every one likes a pretty face, and it is natural that a nice-looking girl will have the advantage over her plainer sisters when it comes to the offer of a position, but business people soon find that brains and beauty do not always go together, and it is then that the plainer girls can show their real worth and ability. Many a good girl has come to grief because of her pretty face. The most successful business women in the world to-day are by no means pretty. We do not think that Marion's beauty is of the "fatal" order. There is too much good sense and wisdom behind it. Nevertheless, it has already been shown that her lovely face has caused her to be annoyed on many occasions.

Drunkards

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Advice to Our Readers Either Sex Who Are Seeking Better Employment.

We receive a great many letters from men and women asking how they may increase their income.

They want work and want it steady at good reasonable pay. There are hundreds of good openings. Our advice, however, is to represent some good reliable firm and sell their goods on commission. Be contented with a sure and steady three or four dollars a day and don't dream of sudden wealth at ten or twenty dollars a day. Take any good concern, the Royal Mfg. Co., for example, and you can't make a mistake. We mention this firm because they make what the people want.

This is important. Handle nothing but what the people want to buy and you will never have any idle days. One of our readers left the farm about a year ago to represent the Royal Mfg. Co. In six months he had buried a $[illegible] mortgage on the farm, had lived well and has money to spare and a steady income as long as he lives.

Hundreds of other men and women have done as well, and are doing it right along. It would be a good idea for every man or woman to write to the Royal Mfg. Co., Box 51, Detroit, Mich. Look over their circulars and catalogue, which will give you an excellent idea of what we mean—sell goods that the people want, and have a sure steady income of at least three dollars every day. Do not put off writing, but go at it at once. Get an early start.

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